DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 936 EC 182 720

AUTHOR Anderson, C. Wilson, Jr.
TITLE Helping Your Learning Disabled Youngster with School Work at Home.
PUB DATE Mar 86
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (23rd, New York, NY, March 12-15, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Homework; *Learning Disabilities; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent Teacher Cooperation

ABSTRACT

The paper describes ways in which parents can help their learning disabled children at home. Suggestions touch upon establishing a set time for evening homework, a consistent place for study, involving fathers in homework, using graph paper to ease arithmetic assignments, considering options for reading assignments, using a duplicate set of books for home to eliminate problems of students' forgetfulness, using positive reinforcement, and developing study guides for texts. Also described are procedures involving underlining and avoidance of excessive erasures. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. Wilson Anderson, Jr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED269936

HELPING YOUR LEARNING DISABLED YOUNGSTER

WITH SCHOOL WORK AT HOME

C. Wilson Anderson, Jr.
10,000 32nd Avenue North
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

(C) 1985, Permission to reproduce is granted.

It is easy for a teacher to say to a parent, "I'll teach him, you love him!" Learning is a full time job for a child and learning takes place both inside and outside of the classroom. It is important that parents and teachers work together so that the child has every opportunity possible to grow in skills, stature and spirit. For most parents helping a child with homework is very much like a married couple hanging wallpaper or putting up curtain rods. They agree on the goal, but each person has very specific, if not different opinions on how that goal should be accomplished. Since the student has learning problems, and the parent(s) may have similiar problems, the parent-becoming-teacher has a very difficult job. The student is already a challenge to teach in school by dedicated, well trained professionals; what then, can parents do to help their child at home?

1. Teachers have to remember that homework is only to be used as a reinforcement for already learned material. Homework is practice work and should NEVER involve new things to be learned.

2. If a child and parent can not accomplish a homework task, The parent should write a note to that effect along with a notation of the amount of time spent and sends it along with the unfinished assignment back to the teacher. Find out AHEAD OF TIME if the teacher is willing to accept a "quick" phone call in the evening if there is a question. It is very helpful if there is an agreement as to "the maximum time" spent on a subject. A quiet kitchen timer set to the agreed upon time is helpful.

3. Since school is often very frustrating to an LD child, the time immediately after school is usually not the time for homework. Each family needs to establish a set time of evening when homework can be accomplished and yet will not interfere with other members activities. Right after supper might be a good choice for most.

4. Structure is a universal need and the LD student needs more than anyone. A consistent place for study is very important. It should be away from distractions such as the TV. One good place that has been used for over hundreds of years is the dining room table. If the LD student is left to study in isolation, then no monitoring can be done.

5. It is a tradition in most American homes that the

EC182720

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

responsibility for education is the mother's responsibility. Since most LD students are male, it is suggested that whenever possible both parents alternate homework shifts. The father's influence and participation, as well as interest, is a very important factor in determining educational success. Students do better when dad is actively involved. Many teachers blame overmothering, but they forget that it is a compensation for underfathering.

6. LD children may have one or two parents who also have a learning problem that only becomes obvious when dealing with school work. Parents should pool their talents and decide who should help whom and in which subjects. It is very helpful if a child knows that mom or dad or Uncle Charlie had a problem learning too. It's not to be used as an excuse, but it is to be used as the reason to work hard. It also helps if a student is involved in the IEP meetings so that he understands his responsibilities in the learning process. If a student is a part of the planning, chances are greater that he/she will be successful.

7. Adults, like their children, enjoy time to relax and to do other things after a busy or tiring day. Homework time is a good time for adult activity that CAN be interrupted to answer questions. Knitting, reading the paper, balancing the check book, all can be interrupted. Getting homework done needs to be a commitment made by all members of the family.

8. If your child has to write an assignment, have him dictate it to you. Then the student can copy it later.

9. Use graph paper for arithmetic assignments if a student has trouble keeping columns straight. If graph paper is not available, turn lined paper sideways and that will help keep the columns straight.

10. Purchase only wide lined paper. Teach the student to write every other line, or invest in the new light blue and white notebook paper printed by Norcom. Writing every other line accomplishes two things. It increases the "skyline effect" and handwriting becomes easier to read, and also there is plenty of room for additions, corrections, and suggestions by proofreading parents or correcting teachers.

11. Encourage your child to use "THE UNDERLINING OPTION" both in and out of school. (See attached sheet).

12. If your child expends a lot of energy erasing his work, refer to "ERASING ERASURES". (Also on the attached sheet).

13. If a child asks how a word is spelled, spell it for him. If the parent doesn't know, then use the dictionary. Adults have a better chance at looking up a word they can't spell than children. If a child can't spell it, how can he look it up? He does not know his spelling options.

14. If there is an assignment to be read, consider two options.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

First, is this assignment available on tape from either The Books for the Blind or tapes done by volunteers in the community? If it is, then make certain that the student follows the reading in the book as it is read to him. Never let the student just listen to the tape. He needs to use two senses in order to learn and remember. The second option is for the parent to read one paragraph, then the student reads the next and so forth.

15. Don't overlook the teaching power of an older or even a slightly younger child.

16. Ask the teacher for a duplicate set of books to be kept at home. This eliminates all sorts of "FORGETTING" problems.

17. Purchase a separate note book for each class. It is the student's responsibility to write down the assignment in each class. The student has the teacher initial the written down assignment. If there is not an assignment, the teacher initials the words "No Assignment." If the student "forgets" to write the assignment, some penalty must be assessed such as doing an extra chore, or loss of a half hour of television.

18. On the last day of each school week, the student should carry his own progress report which is to be brought home to the parents. Keeping current is to be greatly rewarded. "Missing assignments" means a temporary grounding until work is caught up. Grounding should never be for more than 48 hours at a time. That means no phone, visitors, etc. Family occasions and family activities should include the youngster grounded or not.

19. The development of good self-esteem is always at risk---especially for the LD youngster. Increase verbal rewards and physical rewards for completing jobs and for a job well done. According to Dorothy Briggs, it takes five positives to undo one negative.

20. It doesn't take too many negatives to erase all the positives in a child's day. Choose one important area of behavior that needs to be improved upon at a time. Work on that behavior and ignore other areas until improvement is shown. Then target new behavior and work on that.

21. If the teacher provides a study guide for a text, it is an enormous help. A good study guide helps the child organize the information and helps the child distinguish between important and unimportant information. A good study guide will preview all of the vocabulary words that the student should know. If there is no study guide, then one must be created at home. Suggested is a tried and effective study guide. Use a clean page in the notebook and put the chapter number and the text page number at the top of the page. Divide the page into four columns going down the page. Label them VOCABULARY PEOPLE PLACES AND DATES IDEAS AND DISCOVERIES. Write the text BOLD PRINT chapter and sub-chapter headings as they appear. As the text is read fill in the columns, and the headings. Do this for each notebook page.

22. There are two ways of taking notes. The first is to ask a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

good notetaker to use either carbons or NCR paper. The second is to create note sheets just like the study sheets mentioned in idea number 21. The difference is that when the teacher lectures or the class discusses, the student fills out the paper just as he did when studying.

23. Start studying for spelling tests early. If the student learns five a day, it is easier. Test cumulatively. Most LD students will remember only for the test. If words aren't used, they will slip away.

24. If a child asks a question and you don't know the answer, say. "I don't know". "Let's find the answer." Too many adults are embarrassed to admit that they don't know and will try to BLUFF it. Kids should be able to see and appreciate that there are "gaps" in everyone's knowledge. Kids are also more perceptive about when adults stretch the truth, if not abuse it. Honesty is the best policy.

In conclusion, the one common denominator that all of the school subjects have is language. The vocabulary of each subject matter is critical to the comprehension of the subject. There is a saying in teaching, "Just because something has been said, doesn't mean it has been taught." People have to use words many times before those words are learned. Don't overlook vocabulary development. Urge your children to tell you about what they have read or heard in their classes. The Editor of the Orton Dyslexia Society and a colleague of considerable stature and even more wisdom, Margaret Rawson, once wrote. "Real children think and feel. Learning is influenced by the relationships between teachers and learner, and language development promotes discrimination between emotional states and empathy. Motivation is a variable in the learning process. Linguistic competence stands at the very center of what is crucially human in each of us. We are as we speak; we work as we read; we become human as we understand each other through language." Parents and teachers must work together so that the LD child can become the very best person that he can be, not only for himself but for the people in his future.

Many thanks goes to Regina Cicci, Nita Lussenhop and Christi Perkins for their valuable input.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE UNDERLINING OPTION

Too often students who are not good spellers — for whatever the reason — seriously "sandbag" their written expression in order to cover up their inability to spell.

When this happens, three results can be observed. First, the student spells only words that are known. This usually means that the word/syllable ratio drops quite quickly from a comfortable conversational level to a stilted writing level. The second thing that happens is that in a testing situation, the student is forced into a written form of circumlocution and thus creates strange sentences to avoid important words not in the students spelling vocabulary. The third result is that the student lulls himself into thinking he has everyone "off his back"; when the truth is that the student's writing behavior is costing him both grades and "points" by his instructors. His instructors are confused by good verbal class behavior vs. the lazy appearing, if not intellectually embarrassing, written responses.

The underlining option is designed to eliminate these self-defeating writing behaviors and is intended to help the student and is not intended to be a put-down. The underlining option is a simple device. In an in-class situation, when students have to write essay tests, reaction papers, etc. TELL THE STUDENTS TO USE THE APPROPRIATE VOCABULARY BUT UNDERLINE ALL WORDS MISPELLED AND NO POINTS WILL BE DEDUCTED.

If this is done — two benefits occur. First, if the student does trust the instructor, answers on tests will closely resemble the student's intellectual capability or at least the knowledge acquired. Second, a whole area of unknown writing skills surface which then can be remediated.

It is important to remember that an instructor cannot use a student's handicap against him. In most states the inability to spell is considered a handicap.

By using the underlining option, students can produce better subject matter quality which then allows the instructor to better assess the mastered knowledge of the student. These in-class papers then can be used as a basis for referral to the skill center resource staff.

One last note, ALWAYS REQUIRE SOME IN CLASS WRITING TO ASSESS THE STUDENTS' TRUE WRITING CAPABILITIES. Otherwise the student who is the poor writer or speller remains undetected thanks to the efforts of a dedicated corp of proofreaders and a few unsuspecting instructors.

C. Wilson Anderson, Jr.
10,000 32nd Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55441

copyright (c) 1984
permission to reproduce is granted

ERASING ERASURES

There is a significant number of students, mostly boys, who have discovered that erasing words, lines and paragraphs is viewed by teachers as honest academic labor. These students use erasing as avoidance behavior usually to compensate for their inability — real or imagined — to spell, write legibly or compose intelligent thoughts in sentence form.

Those teachers who have in their possession stacks of papers not only full of erasure holes, but also appear to be slept on, can take heart. There is another alternative. It's called "the draw a line through the mistake approach." It is a simple approach which does not cost taxpayer's money; in fact, it saves money. INSTRUCT ALL STUDENTS THAT THEY ARE NOT TO ERASE ANYMORE. INSTEAD, THEY ARE TO DRAW A NEAT, SINGLE LINE THROUGH ANY ERROR AND CONTINUE ON WITH THEIR WORK.

If enforced, this approach produces several results. The first, but not so obvious, is that the line out option allows the teacher to see the mistake, (if any) by the student. This provides valuable insight and diagnostic information as to the struggles a student experiences in written expression. The second reason, worth the effort in shifting tactics, is that time can then be spent on getting as much information down with a minimum of interruptions. The third reason is that it helps the student who has the difficulties understand that it is okay to make mistakes in class; that's what rough drafts are for. The last reason is that when all of these errors surface, they can be noted and managed by both the teacher and the student.

Stopping the constant erasing is similar to breaking a bad habit. It is best done school-wide and in "cold-turkey" style. The student's initial resentment is soon lost in more productive work. Papers become neater, the writing becomes more legible and the level of production increases. This, coupled with the underlining option for misspelled words, will enable the student with problems in written expression to be more successful.

C. Wilson Anderson, Jr.
10,000 32nd Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55441

copyright (c) 1984 permission to reproduce is granted

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the
Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
23rd, New York, NY, March 12-15, 1986